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Effects of atomic radiation

Letter dated 10 October 2011 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly

At the conclusion of the high-level meeting on nuclear safety and security, held in New York on 22 September 2011, I circulated a summary of the discussion that reflected my understanding, as convener and Chair of the high-level meeting, of the views expressed. I also indicated that I would present the Chair's summary to the President of the General Assembly.

I am pleased to transmit to you the Chair's summary of the high-level meeting (see annex) and should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the General Assembly. The document could provide a basis for consideration of this matter in the Fourth Committee and in plenary, as deemed necessary.

I am grateful for your continued personal support to this important issue.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon
Secretary-General

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Annex

High-level meeting on nuclear safety and security 22 September 2011, New York

Chair's summary

The high-level meeting was held on 22 September 2011, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. A total of 69 delegates spoke, including 8 Heads of State or Government, 30 ministers, and representatives of intergovernmental organizations, international organizations, specialized agencies and related organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Secretary-General opened the meeting and invited the President of the General Assembly and the Director General of IAEA, as well as the Heads of State or Government of Brazil, France, Japan, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea and Ukraine, to address the meeting. At the end of the meeting, the Secretary-General, as convener and Chair of the high-level meeting, circulated the following summary of the discussion which reflected his understanding of the views expressed.

1. The high-level meeting focused on strengthening nuclear safety and security, especially in the light of the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station, with a view to building political support and momentum at the highest level for the ongoing and planned efforts of the international community. In this connection, the initiative of the Secretary-General in convening the high-level meeting and the IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety and its outcome were welcomed. Participants expressed appreciation for the United Nations system-wide study on the implications of the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Participants expressed gratitude for the contribution of the United Nations entities, specialized agencies and related organizations that took part in the study.

2. The high-level parallel interactive sessions addressed the topic of "Strengthening nuclear safety and nuclear disaster risk preparedness". The sessions were co-chaired at the ministerial level by Brazil, France, Japan and the Republic of Korea. During the high-level segment of the interactive sessions, the Heads of State or Government of Hungary and Lithuania addressed the meeting. Ministers and deputy ministers from Germany, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America participated as discussants at the interactive sessions.

Implications of the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station

3. Participants expressed solidarity with the people and Government of Japan following the earthquake and tsunami on 11 March, which gave rise to the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station. It was noted that the Fukushima accident has given rise to concerns regarding the adequacy of international safety standards and conventions, the global emergency preparedness and response system, and the effectiveness of national regulatory bodies. These concerns have highlighted the need to further improve the nuclear safety regime and the role of IAEA.

4. Participants affirmed the right of States to choose their own energy mix. It was recognized that some States consider nuclear power to be a viable option in meeting their energy needs, while other States have decided not to use, to phase out or to

reconsider the development of nuclear power. Some participants emphasized the importance of renewable energy and conservation as alternative energy policies.

5. Participants noted that public confidence in nuclear power has been affected by the Fukushima accident. In particular, participants noted public concerns regarding the impact of radiation on human health. Towards ensuring public trust, participants acknowledged the need to meet the high level of public expectation for maximum efforts to improve nuclear safety and for full transparency and openness in all aspects of nuclear energy and the impact of radiation on human health.

6. Participants recognized that major nuclear accidents may have consequences that transcend national boundaries, including radiological effects on people, agriculture and the environment, as well as economic and development impacts, and that such consequences require an international approach.

Strengthening nuclear safety

Promoting the highest levels of nuclear safety

7. Participants affirmed that the responsibility for ensuring the application of the highest standards of nuclear safety and for providing a timely, transparent and adequate response to nuclear emergencies, including addressing vulnerabilities revealed by accidents, lies with each State and operating organization. Participants further affirmed that safety is a key element for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Participants emphasized the commitment of all States to apply the highest standards of safety to all existing and planned nuclear installations. Participants underscored the importance of independent regulatory frameworks for ensuring nuclear safety.

8. Participants noted with appreciation the convening by the IAEA Director General of the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety and welcomed its outcome: the ministerial declaration and the IAEA Action Plan on Nuclear Safety adopted by the IAEA Board of Governors and endorsed by the General Conference. Participants hoped that the Action Plan would contribute to strengthening international nuclear safety and looked forward to its full implementation. Participants affirmed the key, statutory role of IAEA in the development of nuclear safety standards and welcomed the intention of the Agency to review and revise the relevant IAEA safety standards as necessary, as provided for by the Action Plan. All States were urged to join and effectively implement all relevant conventions[1] and to apply all relevant international standards and guidelines.

9. Participants welcomed the steps taken so far by the international community to discuss the lessons learned from the Fukushima accident and to strengthen nuclear safety and emergency response and preparedness, including the outcomes of the third session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Group of Eight (G-8) summit in Deauville, the ministerial seminar on nuclear safety and the related forum on the Fukushima accident held in Paris.

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[1] These include: Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident; Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency; Convention on Nuclear Safety; Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management; and Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

10. In this connection, Japan reiterated its decision to host a follow-up high-level meeting on nuclear safety in the second half of 2012, in cooperation with IAEA. Participants expressed support for further expert meetings to be organized by IAEA, to analyse and learn the lessons from the Fukushima accident.

11. Participants also acknowledged the steps taken by Governments, including reviews of their nuclear safety standards and the adequacy of nuclear regulatory frameworks, as well as assessments of the safety of their planned and existing nuclear installations. States that have not done so were urged to promptly undertake a national assessment of the design of nuclear power plants against site specific extreme natural hazards, including the possible impact of multiple events, and to implement the necessary corrective action in a timely manner.

12. Participants expressed support for enhancing the transparency and effectiveness of communication among operators, regulators and relevant international organizations and for strengthening the role of IAEA in this regard. Participants emphasized the importance of transparency and openness and the dissemination of timely, clear and easily understandable information to the public, utilizing available expertise and monitoring techniques of the relevant international organizations. Participants recognized that public concerns about the effects of radiation could be best addressed through objective, scientifically based assessments, transparency, and accurate and thorough public reporting. Participants underscored the importance of increased cooperation between the relevant international organizations.

Strengthening the international framework for nuclear safety

13. Participants expressed support for the strengthening and review of the international nuclear safety framework, including enhancing implementation of existing instruments and consideration of proposals made to amend specific conventions. They welcomed the decision of the Contracting parties of the Convention on Nuclear Safety to convene an extraordinary meeting in 2012 on the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station. Participants affirmed the central role of IAEA in promoting international cooperation and in coordinating international efforts to strengthen global nuclear safety, in providing expertise and advice in this field, and in promoting nuclear safety culture worldwide.

14. Participants welcomed the efforts by IAEA to develop a standard methodology for the above-mentioned hazard assessments and noted the benefit of impartial international peer review of such assessments. Participants expressed support for strengthening existing IAEA peer reviews of nuclear regulatory effectiveness, the operational safety, design safety and emergency preparedness and response. Some participants wished to see these peer reviews have a more mandatory nature.

15. Some participants emphasized the necessity of a global nuclear liability regime that addresses the concerns of all States that might be affected by a nuclear accident with a view to providing appropriate compensation for nuclear damage.

Nuclear safety and security

16. Participants recognized that the Fukushima accident also has implications for nuclear security. Many participants recognized the increased synergy between nuclear safety and nuclear security, and acknowledged the importance of a coordinated approach to nuclear safety and security, pursued within the framework

of IAEA, and as addressed in the IAEA safety standards and security guidance. Some participants stressed that nuclear security and nuclear safety may have different causes, which may require different responses. It was also emphasized that nuclear safety cannot be dealt with in isolation of nuclear security, non-proliferation and disarmament, and that nuclear disarmament strengthens nuclear safety and security.

17. Participants recognized that there are several common characteristics in incidents arising from the unauthorized acquisition, use, transport or storage of nuclear materials or attacks on nuclear installations and nuclear accidents, and that both types of incidents may have similar consequences in terms of radioactive releases. Participants expressed heightened interest in addressing the nexus between nuclear safety and security, and to take account of the lessons learned from the Fukushima accident relating to the potential vulnerabilities of nuclear power plants.

18. In this regard, participants took note of their recent accessions to the international conventions dealing with nuclear safety and security.

19. Some participants noted that matters pertaining to nuclear security had been addressed in a number of forums, including the Nuclear Security Summit, the G-8 Global Partnership and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. The key role of IAEA in promoting international cooperation to strengthen nuclear security was emphasized, as was the importance of ensuring that IAEA has the resources needed to perform this role.

20. In this connection, some participants expressed the hope that the Nuclear Security Summit, to be held in Seoul in March 2012, would reinforce global efforts to enhance nuclear security. Furthermore, participants expressed support for the efforts of the Republic of Korea to address the synergy between nuclear security and nuclear safety at the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit.

Enhancing emergency preparedness and response

21. All States were urged to conduct prompt national reviews of their emergency preparedness and response arrangements and capabilities, with the IAEA secretariat providing support and assistance as requested. A number of participants emphasized the importance of universal implementation of the relevant IAEA standards and response at the national level as a key to improving preparedness and response. In this regard, IAEA should review and revise, as necessary, the IAEA safety standards and continuously upgrade standards, guidance and practical tools in the area of emergency preparedness and response. Participants underlined that capacity-building programmes should include education and training and exercises at the national, regional and international levels, and that such programmes should cover all the nuclear safety-related areas, including emergency preparedness and response. An initiative was proposed to create an international response force attached to IAEA, in addition to the creation of a training centre to respond to nuclear accidents.

22. Participants underlined the need to review and strengthen the international emergency preparedness and response framework, and to strengthen the assistance mechanisms to ensure that necessary assistance is made available promptly and to consider enhancing and fully utilizing the IAEA Response and Assistance Network (RANET), including expanding its rapid response capabilities.

23. It was stressed that effective local, national, regional and international preparedness and response capabilities and arrangements are essential to minimize the impacts of nuclear and radiological incidents and emergencies. In this regard, participants highlighted the importance of integrated planning for preparedness and response and that such capabilities should be improved.

24. Some participants underscored the need to strengthen, within existing mechanisms, the link between the international system of response to nuclear and radiological incidents and emergencies and the international humanitarian coordination system and contingency planning and preparedness.

25. Some participants, including specialized agencies and international organizations, highlighted the need to enhance the information exchange of environmental radioactivity monitoring data in nuclear and radiological incidents.

26. Participants expressed support for a number of additional measures, including promoting emergency preparedness at all levels; ensuring greater cohesion between national and international emergency response efforts, including through the development of training at the regional and international levels, strengthening regional capabilities; and enhancing the role of IAEA, including through analysis of emergency situations and prognosis of possible scenarios based on evidence, scientific knowledge and the capabilities of States, and by conducting, in case of a nuclear emergency and with the prior consent of the State concerned, timely fact-finding missions and making the results publicly available.

27. Taking into consideration the points raised during the high-level meeting, the Secretary-General suggested the following actions:

(a) The Secretary-General will forward the present summary to the General Assembly for consideration, as appropriate, by the Fourth Committee and the plenary, as well as to the 2012 Seoul Nuclear Security Summit and the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT);

(b) In order to facilitate a full assessment of the levels of exposure and radiation risks attributable to the Fukushima accident by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), the General Assembly should ensure that the Committee has all the necessary capacity and resources to better undertake its work;

(c) Given that the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference recognized the need for continuing international efforts to address the safety and security issues associated with nuclear energy, the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference should consider allocating specific time to discuss nuclear safety and security;

(d) In view of the efforts by the Secretary-General and the IAEA Director General in promoting greater participation in the international instruments on nuclear safety and nuclear security, the Secretary-General urges all States to become party to and effectively implement relevant international instruments. In particular, the Secretary-General reiterates his invitation to States that are not yet parties to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism to become party to this important treaty. The Secretary-General also calls upon the States parties to the Convention to consider ways to promote ratification and

implementation of the Convention in 2012, marking the fifth year of its entry into force. This matter can be further discussed at the Nuclear Security Summit to be held in Seoul in 2012;

(e) In the light of the intersection between nuclear energy, climate change and sustainable development, the Secretary-General recommends that the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 consider addressing these issues, as appropriate, in its outcome document. It should also consider ways of giving these issues attention in the preparatory activities of the Conference;

(f) Given the need for establishing a closer link between the nuclear response system and the humanitarian coordination system in case of nuclear accidents, the Secretary-General will ask the Emergency Relief Coordinator and Chair of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to study ways to enhance the capacity of the organizations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in this regard. The result of the study will be announced at the appropriate forums;

(g) Recalling the work of the G-8 Nuclear Safety and Security Group (NSSG), including the launch of the International Initiative on 3S-Based Nuclear Energy Infrastructure, at the 2008 G-8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit, to raise awareness and improve safeguards, safety and security in the context of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and also recalling the G-8 summit in Deauville and the ministerial seminar on nuclear safety, the Secretary-General encourages the G-8 to further develop this initiative taking into account the issues raised by the Fukushima accident.